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Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W
---------- 011355
R 141100Z MAY 74
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5485

S E C R E T TUNIS 2917

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, TS, US
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S PROJECTED VISIT TO U.S.

1. SUMMAR: DURING SEPARATE CALLS I MADE ON PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI MAY 13, THESE TWO OFFICIALS AGAIN SUGGEST POSTPONING PROJECTED BOURGUIBA VISIT TO U.S. UNTIL NOVEMBER. CHATTI SAID GEFINITE DECISION MUST BE MADE BY MAY 17 IN ORDER TO HAVE ADEQUATE TIME TO SETP UP ALTERNATE PLANS. I INFORMED HIM THAT SINCE WE UNLIKELY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE RESPONSE BY THEN, WE WOULD UNDERSTAND IF TUNISIAN DECIDE POSTPONE VISIT UNTIL LATER. CHATTI EXPRESSED STRONG HOPE PRESIDTPOM NIXON WOULD VISIT TUNIS, IF ALGIERS IS INCLUDED ON ANY POSSIBLE VISIT TO MIDDEL EAST AREA. END SUMMARY.

2. WHILE INDICATING BELIEF IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO POSTPONE VISIT UNTIL NOVEMBER, NOUIRA DID NOT DWELL AT LENGTH ON SUBJECT. CHATTI'S COMMENTS ON OTHER HAND WERE DETAILED. THUS, QHATTI INDICATED THAT GOT WOULD NEED TO MAKE DEFINIE DECISION ONE WAY OR ANOTHER BEFORE HE, CHATTI, DEPARTS FOR CAIRO ON SUNDAY, MAY 19 TO ATTEND CONFERENCE OF ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS AND DEFENSE MINISTERS. HE SAID HIS NO. 2, SECSTATE HAMZAOUI, IS ILL AND HE, CHATTI, WOULD NOT BE RETURNING TO TUNIS UNTIL MAY 26 OR 27. NO LATER THAN MAY 17 HE WOULD HAVE TO START CONTACTING IRANIAN, TURKISH AND PAKISTANI AMBASSADORS FOR PURPOSE OF
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LINING UP STOPOVERS FOR BOURGUIBA ON HWS ALTERNATE

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ROUTE EASTWARD TO CHINA. (VISIT TO CANADA CONTINGENT
UPON U.S. VISIT).

3. I TOLD BOTH THE PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER
THAT PRESIDENT NIXON'S PLANS REMAINED INDEFINTE AND
THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT WE CAN PROVIDE A RESPONSE VERY
SOON. I DOUBTED THAT A DEFINITE ANSWER WOULD BE AVAILABLE
BY MAY 17. ACCORDINGLY, I INFORMED CHATTI THAT IF TUNISIANS
HAD TO MAKE ALTERNATIVE PLANS BY MAY 17, WE WOULD
UNDERSTAND. DECISION TO POSTPONE BOURGUIBA'S VISIT WOULD
BE THEIRS. THEY SHOULD NOT, HOWEVER, IGNORE THE POSSIBILITY
THAT WASHINGTON MIGHT STILL SEEE ITS WAY CLEAR TO SCHEDULE
A BOURGUIBA VISIT IN EARLY JUNE. AFTER FURTHER DISCUSSION,
CHATTI REITERATED POINT THAT GOT COULD NOT RPT NOT WAIT
BEYOND 17TH. I SAID THAT I WOULD TRANSMIT HIS DECISION
TO WASHINGTON.

4. CHATTI THEN COMMENTED THAT IF PRESIDENT NIXON VISITED
MIDDLE EAST AREA AND INCLUDED ALGIERS, TUNISIAN
GOVERNMENT WOULD COUNT ON PRESIDENT NIXON STOPPING
OVER IN TUNIS. HE SAID THAT GOT WOULD BE UNHAPPY IF
UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES TUNIS WERE BYPASSED. I CALLED
FOREIGN MINISTER'S ATTENTION TO ROLE PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE
CAN PLAY IN CONTEXT MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS AND HIS STATUS
IN NON-ALIGNED WORLD. CHATTI REPLIED THAT WHILE HE IS
PREPARED TO ACCEPT ARGUMENT THAT BOUMEDIENE CURRENTLY HAS
CAPABILITY EXERCISE MORE INFLUENCE ON INTERNATIONAL SCENE
THAN BOURGUIBA, IT IS NOT RPT NOT JUST "COMJUNCTURE OF
EVENTS" THAT IS IMPORTANT. AFTER ALL, HE SAID, IRAG HAS
NO ROLE TO PLAY IN NEGOTITATIONS AND SYRIA'S PARTICIPATION
WILL BE DETERMINED ESSENTIALLY BY FACTORS OTHER THAN POSSIBLE
BOUMEDIENE INFLUENCE. IN ANY CASEE, TUNISIA HAS AS GOOD RE-
LATIONS WITH SYRIA AS DOES ALGERIA. WHAT USG SHOULD KEEP
IN MIND, CONTINUED CHATTI, IS PERMANENCE (HE REPEATED WORD
SEVERAL TIMES) OF CLOSE TUNISIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP,
AS COMPARED WITH "CONJUNCTURAL" DEVELOPMENTS.

5. COMMENT: SINCE WE OBVIOUSLY CANNOT PROVIDE GOT
BY MAY 17 WITH A FIRM DECISION RE PROJECTED BOUGUIBA
VISIT TO U.S., WE MUST CONSIDER VISIT DURING FIRST
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WEEK IN JUNE AS OUT OF QUESTION. ONCE GOT STARTS LINING
UP STOPOVERS IN IRAN, TURKEY AND PAKISTAN IT WOULD BE
UNDESIRABLE FOR TUNISIANS TO CANCEL THESE PLANS AT LAST
MINUTE. TWO POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES FOR SUBSEQUENT
BOURGUIBA VISIT TO WASHINGTON ARE: (A) LATER ON IN JUNE:
OR (B) NEXT FALL. RE (A), SINCE BOURGUIBA DOES NOT LEAVE
CHINA UNTIL JUNE 20 AND THEN PLANS TO SPEND TWO DAYS EACH
AT SAIGON AND HANOI, HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO REACH WASHINGTON

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UNTIL THE END OF JUNE. WHILE CHATTI INDICATED BOURGUIBA
WOULD BE TIRED AFTER SUCH A LONG TRIP, HE DID NOT RPT
NOT RULE OUT THIS ALTERNATIVE.

6. RE PRESIDENT NIXON'S POSSIBLE VISIT TO MIDDLE EAST,
CHATTI MAKES GOOD ARGUMENT IN TERMS OF LONG-STANDING CLOSE
U.S.-TUNISIAN RELATIONSHIP AS COMPARED WITH JOHNNY-COME-
LATELY NATURE OF GOOD ALGERIAN-U.S. RELATIONS. ON OTHER HAND,
OBVIOUSLY IF PRESIDENT VISITS ALGIERS AND TUNIS AND
LEAVES OUT RABAT, KING HASSAN'S NOSE WILL BE OUT OF
JOINT. THEREFORE, AS MUCH AS I WOULD WELCOME A
PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO TUNIS, I APPRECIATE THE REASONS
WHY IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE WITHOUT ALSO
INCLUDING RABAT. AS INDICATED BEFORE, SUCH A BYPASS
WOULD BE "MANAGEABLE" IN TERMS U.S. - TUNISIAN RELATIONS
ALTHOUGH BOURGUIBA WOULD BE TERRIBLY HURT. IF PRESIDENT
NIXON SKIPS ALGIERS, OF COURSE, WE WOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM.
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